

STATEMENT OF MR. JUM CALHUON, HEAD MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH,
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
2095 HILLSIDE ROAD
STORRS CONNECTICUT

Mr. Chairman, I really am happy to be here, and there is only one other place I would rather be. I was looking for a good physical therapist about a week ago and could not find one, and could not cure the ills of an ankle injury, but I am happy to be here, and Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you very much. As a coach and educator for the past 32 years -- and by the way, I see that Senator Kerry is not here. If there is any interpretation of the Bostonian accent, he will be able to help later on.

As a coach and educator for the past 32 years, as a head basketball coach at collegiate institutions for 28 of them, I have great concerns about gambling on college athletics. This is not a new problem. We have had these point-shaving scandals for the past 50 years.

At the University of Connecticut, legendary coach Hugh Greer, who was considered to be the coach at Connecticut for almost 30 years, died at age 54 after three of his players in the early sixties were found to point-shave. One of those players was incredibly close to Hugh, and his wife claims to this day that the heart attack by which he died at age 53 was caused by his grief over, a) his beloved players, and the integrity of the game that he loved, so this is not a new problem.

But as we reach the year 2000 and we were in the decade of the nineties, more gambling scandals have occurred than in the previous history of college athletics. The amount of money being bet is starting to become beyond belief. Social acceptance of gambling, and the fact that gambling has become an integral part of the university culture, makes it imperative that we extend the ban on betting on college games in all States.

This, I realize, will not stop gambling, illegal or otherwise, but I think it will greatly reduce the impact on our student athletes and certainly on our game. Our game must maintain its integrity. This is not a point-the-finger attitude. It is merely a starting point. There is something legal being done that, if stopped, will be a starting point for us to attack illegal activities.

To me personally, and I know to many other coaches, and I am speaking on behalf of them in many ways, the publishing of point spreads and the legalized gambling on college games in Nevada

protects and legitimizes an illegal activity. Las Vegas is a great entertainment city. I enjoy it. I realize at this moment I probably will not be coaching the Revels some day, but the threat of the scandal to our game and our kids must be reduced and hopefully stopped. I see this not as a panacea. I see it as a beginning. This is something we can control. The illegal activities are something we hopefully will control.

As a coach and mentor, and this is something I really want to address myself to since so many other issues have been raised today, and rightfully so, certainly, but as a coach and mentor to my players, I have great concerns for them, concerns that the university culture has built into its very fabric now that gambling is an every-day activity. It exists in dormitory life, it exists in fraternities every single day, and the fact that many of our student athletes, all of our student athletes live in this culture, our university culture, and they in fact become the focal point of this billions of dollars being wagered, is a very, very dangerous situation.

I am concerned that many of our kids come from modest economic backgrounds, and this even places greater pressure upon them to make a mistake in judgment which could ruin their lives and certainly put a mark on them, the university, and athletics in general. I am concerned that major college athletics is highly pressured enough without additional burdens of worrying about gambling activities. I see it from a personal nature our kids being attacked from all sides. As money increases, so does other types of activities.

I am greatly concerned that our kids are getting mixed signals when they get up in the morning and read in the newspaper what the, quote, betting line or spread is on a game they are going to participate in that night. What kind of signal are we telling our kid? We are telling them it is legitimate.

I just note, I was going to take a job one time at a place in Arizona a number of years ago -- and I was not going to take the job. I wanted to stay in New England, and I took over in Connecticut, but anyway, I always remember my sister saying to me, you're going to Arizona State and taking the job there, and I said, no, I am not, and she says, yes, you are. Don't lie to me. I said, what do you mean, lie to you, and she said, I read it in the newspaper. You're going to Arizona State. With that -- our kids believe if it is in the paper, it is true, and when it is seen every day and every morning that Connecticut, although heavily favored last night, only won by 7 points, there is a message going there. It is a message that scares me.

And last concern, these are 18 to 20-year-old kids -- and trust me, I coach them, and they are kids. That I can guarantee you, and they make the same judgments. Many times I tell people, when they ask me to describe my job and I say simply, if you can imagine yourself with your teenage children, and have kids run up and down the court with shorts on, with your paycheck in their mouth, what a comforting feeling that must be.

They are kids, and that is what they are, and yet they are in college, as many of us were, struggling to find their own self-identity, and should not be the focal point of billions of dollars of wagering. This is too much to ask of them. It is too much to ask of any athlete.

At U Conn we still have, and will still have, informational seminars. We will bring the FBI in every year. We will bring Bill Saum and the NCAA in. We do institutional daily reminders. But if we can show the wisdom of the State of Nevada by banning betting on our institutions, our collegiate institutions, with the passage of this bill, I believe it will greatly reduce the risk from gambling that we now face. It will not eliminate, but it will be a great starting point.

And just on a personal note, I find the acceptance of gambling by people in general is phenomenal. No one ever has a problem saying to me, coach, you did not cover. They may say any other thing, but there is such a great acceptance, and I think a great deal of that has to do with the fact that there is legalized gambling on college athletics, and there is a point spread published every single day. It is a great danger to our sport.

It is something that scares me every single day, and I know it scares every other single coach who coaches kids, and when you think it is coaching kids, much as many of us, all of us here were at one point in time, it is an issue we must come to wrestle with.

I want to thank you very much for having me here today, and hopefully I gave you at least an insight as to how I feel about our university kids. Thank you very much.